

The professionalisation of festival organisations: A relational approach to knowledge management

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Abstract

In this article we examine the emergence of knowledge management (KM) within the professionalisation of festivals and events. The growing complexity of festival management places pressure on organisations to effectively manage ‘knowledge’ in order to succeed. Knowledge is commonly conceptualised as information that can be stored or itemised through checklists. We offer an alternative conceptualisation of KM as a relational construction shaped by the organisational culture and structure. We develop this relational approach through a case study of the Queensland Music Festival (QMF) to examine the construction of KM roles and responsibilities. Our ethnographic research and qualitative analysis identifies how QMF implicitly utilises chief knowledge officer, knowledge broker, and knowledge worker roles. These roles were successfully performed over a short duration and yet they were not defined or explicitly stated. We discuss how the culture and spatial organisation of work teams contributed to a collective understanding of the value of sharing and creating knowledge. With growing professionalisation we argue that festival organisations will increasingly develop a more self-conscious awareness of the significance of KM language and practice. The findings will enable festival managers to better understand how KM processes are embedded within an organisational culture and contribute to organisational learning.

Keywords: knowledge management, festival organisations, professionalisation, organisational culture, POD-structure

Introduction

The growth and diversity of music festivals (Hede & Rentschler, 2008) has led to a highly competitive external environment and a host of internal challenges for event managers (Getz & Andersson, 2008). The professionalisation of the industry has added a further level of management complexity and increased pressure on festival and event organisations. As Morgan (2009, p. 82, emphasis in original) noted “The first and most fundamental success factor is *operational and administrative efficiency*”. In this article we examine how effective knowledge management is one domain that can assist festival organisations to achieve operational efficiency and effectiveness (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995; Dalkir, 2005; Debowski, 2006). Over the past two decades it has been argued within the broader organisational literature that knowledge is the key differentiating factor in organisations and that knowledge management is important for long-term success. Knowledge management is the process and “capability of a company as a whole to create new knowledge, disseminate it throughout the organization, and embody it in products, services and systems” (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995, p. 3). Within the context of event management the academic focus on knowledge is an emerging area of research and growing area of practice in the era of professionalisation.

Effective knowledge management policies, processes and practices assist event organisations achieve their economic, cultural and creative outcomes. The professional roles of event management staff who create, organise and transfer knowledge are also central to ensuring music festivals remain innovative and competitive in the long-run. Yet, there has been little research undertaken to explore how music festival organisations and their staff think about and manage knowledge in the context of

professionalisation. To further understanding of knowledge management practices this article draws upon a case study of a large, multi-event festival organisation, the Queensland Music Festival. The research aimed to identify how festival staff (permanent and seasonal) perceived their roles and responsibilities in the knowledge management process. Second, the research examined how the organisational structure and culture of the festival importantly created the basis for a shared understanding of knowledge management processes and practices. The findings aim to contribute to the professional development of festival management by highlighting how knowledge management is embedded in an organisational culture that supports new ideas, knowledge creation and organisational learning.

Literature Review

Knowledge management as a concept and set of practices has been constructed from different perspectives in the literature that place emphasis upon either technological, organisational or relational dimensions (Heisig, 2009). Within the festival and event management literature the importance of knowledge management has been acknowledged (Getz, 2007; Allen, O'Toole, McDonnell, & Harris, 2011). However, the emphasis in this field has largely been upon documenting and storing knowledge, thus knowledge is most commonly constructed as having technological and 'asset' like properties.

The 'technological' construction of knowledge management focuses upon knowledge transfer and knowledge documentation issues that can be enhanced through technology, such as emails, databases, internal blogs or wikis, or other knowledge management

systems (Alavi & Leidner, 2001; Schuett, 2003). More recently information and knowledge documentation in databases and checklists has been closely examined within an event context. The documentation of knowledge in manuals and checklists is regarded as crucial (Hanlon & Jago, 2009; Tonge, 2009), particularly in the running of mega events such as the Olympics. Chappelet (2000), for example, stresses the importance of training volunteers, and writing and distributing manuals among employees. During the Sydney Olympic Games 2000 a system – the TOK (Transfer of Olympic Knowledge) – was established, through which tacit knowledge could be turned into formal knowledge and manuals that could be shared between organisations. TOK enabled the subsequent Games to benefit from the lessons learned during the Sydney event. Effective knowledge management, therefore, involves translating tacit knowledge that has not been consciously identified as it is “tied to the senses, tactile experiences, movement skills, intuition, unarticulated mental models, or implicit rules of thumb” (Nonaka & Von Krogh, 2009, p. 636). Singh and Hu (2008) examined knowledge exchange between the Athens Organizing Committee and the Greek National Tourism Organization during the 2004 Athens Olympic Games. They found that both institutions created a large amount of knowledge and also shared some of it, highlighting the importance of transferring different kinds of knowledge to future organising committees. Although very valuable, such knowledge sharing programmes require a lot of resources, and are thus difficult to implement in small or medium-sized festival organisations. Furthermore, they construct knowledge primarily as an asset.

The ‘organisational’ focus includes research on organisational structures and designs that help facilitate knowledge management via formal as well as informal groups, PODS and communities-of-practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998; Szulanski,

2000; Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder, 2002; Fenton & Albers, 2007). In the broader literature Albers and Brewer (2003) in particular highlight the importance of group structures that focus on diversity among group members to enhance knowledge creation and transfer. In addition, Fenton and Albers (2007) maintain that best practices developed within one POD or team should ideally be applied across other teams as well as the organisation as a whole. In the event literature Getz (1998) examined information sharing and knowledge development between festival organisations. He found that most festival managers largely relied upon active participation, or “learning through doing”, and through observation of other festivals and event practitioners. Managers conducted comparisons across areas such as, programming, marketing, fund-raising, and ticket sales with emphasis being placed upon information and knowledge transfer *between* different festivals, rather than *within* the festival organisation itself.

Another study focussing on the organisational dimension of knowledge management was conducted by Abfalter, Stadler and Müller (2012) with one small festival organisation in Colorado. The authors explore how the development of a community-of-practice across the festival team involved several levels of participation and involvement with the organisation. This informal and flexible structure proved successful in terms of sharing knowledge with new and seasonal staff members within the festival organisation. The study revealed that both formal and informal ways of sharing knowledge with newcomers in temporary festival organisations are essential for the acquisition of organisational knowledge and, “this is particularly important during increases in staff turnover and shifts in the relation between keepers of knowledge and newcomers” (Abfalter, et al., 2012, p. 13). The study is centred on knowledge sharing activities and strategies through a focus on how a community-of-practice structure

enables participation and involvement during the festival season and knowledge sharing practices with new staff members.

The third perspective develops a 'relational' focus on the 'soft' factors of knowledge management, such as people, organisational culture, interaction and communication, relationships, trust, power, and motivation (Huemer, von Krogh, & Roos, 1998; Blackler & McDonald, 2000; DeLong & Fahey, 2000; Osterloh & Frey, 2000; Ardichvili, Page, & Wentling, 2003; O'Dell, 2004; Yang, 2007). The relational focus of knowledge management pays attention to knowledge as it is produced and shared by staff members in different roles. Hence, it is crucial for festival organisations to understand how employees interpret and share the knowledge they carry around "in their head" within the time pressured context of organising an event (Van der Wagen, 2007, p. 31). With the temporal, "pulsating" nature (Hanlon & Cuskelly, 2002; Hanlon & Jago, 2009) of festivals there are few permanently employed staff members and many seasonal staff members. Festival organisations thus grow and contract quickly in relation to the stage of the event lifecycle. In this organisational environment knowledge about event operations and key relationships has to be shared quickly and efficiently with and between a diverse range of individuals. Furthermore, seasonal staff members are likely to move on to other organisations once the festival is over, resulting in loss of corporate knowledge.

The growth of event management as a professional domain (Mair, 2009) has increased expectations that festival managers will become more knowledgeable about organisational culture and processes such as human resources, strategic planning, team

communication, event operations, finance etc (Junek, Lockstone, & Mair, 2009). In addition, managers must also coordinate and integrate the roles, responsibilities and professional expertise of seasonal staff members and contractors (Van der Wagen, 2007). Crucial to the success of a festival is the understanding that all staff have about the nature and scope of their individual roles and organisational responsibilities. Townley (1993) argues that specific job roles are usually articulated in job descriptions, task specifications and even training specifications. However, job descriptions provide only one source of information about event roles for employees. Staff have to interpret their specific job related tasks and relationships through the norms, practices and discourses that construct the organisational culture of the festival. In terms of specific knowledge management roles within festival organisations, historically there has been little explicit recognition of jobs, or job titles, despite professionalisation. As Getz argues “Event managers are already expected to conduct themselves as professionals...” (2007, p. 288). However, the implicit way in which festivals practice knowledge management provides a number of challenges for managers and staff who are often employed on short term contracts. Specifically, there is a need for effective communication between staff with different expertise, greater clarity about role expectations in complex environments, and reflection upon how to utilise and share staff insights to enable efficiency and innovation within festival organisations.

Human resource management within festivals has also been identified as significant in knowledge management research (Yahya & Goh, 2002; Currie & Kerrin, 2003; Gloet & Berrell, 2003). Event organisers are reliant upon an individual’s previous professional experiences rather than on training, due to time limitations in organising and planning events. Therefore, the opportunity to train and develop knowledge management skills is

limited. This is a particular challenge with volunteers, but also with other staff members, since most event training and learning is on-the-job (Van der Wagen, 2007). Furthermore, “pulsating” festival organisations rely on the expertise of various stakeholders in dealing with certain aspects of the festival. Hanlon and Jago (2009, p. 96) argue that the management of these teams and relationships can be challenging as they are unstable and volatile and “(...) based more upon high levels of adrenalin, passion and commitment than on the process of establishing long-term working relationships”. Hence, there are numerous challenges for event managers in relation to how to mobilise human resources, undertake professional development and ensure effective communication between staff with the heightened intensity of different phases in the festival lifecycle.

Through our review of the literature we argue that the process of knowledge creation and transfer involves far more than ‘information’ management, databases and checklists (McElroy, 2003); it is also influenced by relationships and networks within and beyond the organisation. In addition, the effective management of knowledge is connected to the festival culture and the exercise of power through staff roles and relationships that can facilitate or constrain knowledge transfer (Foucault, 1980; Townley, 1993; Clarke & Jepson, 2011). Knowledge is not produced in a vacuum within music festival organisations, rather knowledge is created, managed and at times contested through the power relations that ‘govern’ the conduct of employees. While workplace hierarchies and formalised roles exist to structure the field of power relations, Foucault and scholars such as Clegg, argue that resistance and regulation produce the lived context of organisational cultures (Foucault, 1980; Clegg, 1998). In this article we extend the ‘relational’ perspective on knowledge management to consider how the festival

organisation enables or constrains the exercise of power by festival staff as they enact (largely implicit) knowledge management roles.

Knowledge management roles and responsibilities

One area of knowledge management that has attracted particular attention is concerned with the implementation of identified roles and responsibilities within organisations. Three common knowledge management roles include those of chief knowledge officers, knowledge brokers and knowledge workers (Earl & Scott, 1999; Meyer, 2010). *Chief knowledge officers* are responsible for designing knowledge management systems and processes, and aim to facilitate the transfer and exchange of both explicit and tacit knowledge (Earl & Scott, 1999; Bergeron, 2003; Schuett, 2003). Burstein, Sohal and Zyngier (2010) further identified *KM champions and strategists* and argue that they are similar to the CKO, however, there can be more than one within an organisation. Usually *KM champions and strategists* have some sort of vision for the organisation and are part of the senior management team.

Knowledge brokers can be defined as “people whose job it is to move knowledge around and create connections” (Meyer, 2010, p. 118). It is the knowledge brokers’ responsibility to facilitate information and knowledge creation and transfer within the organisation, as well as connecting people so that they can share knowledge. Knowledge brokers usually have a good understanding of the networks and links within an organisation as well as with partners, customers and other external bodies, and therefore focus more on the relational dimension of knowledge management rather than the technological dimension. Knowledge brokers are not necessarily senior managers;

they can also be middle-managers, with multiple knowledge brokers possible within an organisation (Meyer, 2010).

Finally, all employees of an organisation can be understood as *knowledge workers*. Knowledge workers create, share and use knowledge on a day-to-day basis (Burstein, et al., 2010). It can be argued that everyone plays an important role in knowledge management, because “[k]nowledge management cannot be supported by a single librarian or tech support with a toll-free number” (O’Dell, 2004, p. 24). The challenge for an organisation is to create a climate and culture that supports and values the input and ideas of all staff regardless of specialisation or position within the hierarchy. The scope of these knowledge management roles does figure implicitly within the responsibilities of festival staff; however, they are *not* explicitly identified for each organisational position. Greater understanding of explicit and implicit knowledge management roles and responsibilities can help staff members to utilise their professional expertise and at the same time develop new skills in the era of professionalisation. To examine these knowledge management roles and responsibilities within an event organisational context an ethnographic study of the Queensland Music Festival was undertaken.

The Queensland Music Festival

The Queensland Music Festival (QMF) vision is to “transform lives through unforgettable musical experiences” (QMF, 2011). It is a 17-day long, biennial music festival taking place in Brisbane and regional communities all over the state of Queensland. The Queensland Music Festival was chosen as a case study for this project

because it can be seen as a 'unique case' in terms of knowledge management. First, the festival is not bound to one specific location, but rather spreads over the entire state of Queensland. Knowledge is therefore dispersed and localised in different communities, which makes knowledge management very difficult for the organisation. Secondly, the QMF takes place biennially and involves extensive forward planning with community stakeholders which is central to the temporal aspect of knowledge management. While this timeframe enables the festival to have greater time to create new knowledge in the planning phase, it also means that significant knowledge can be lost with staff changes in both core, contract and voluntary roles. The first author gained approval from the executive director of QMF to conduct the ethnographic research and subsequent approval was provided by the QMF board of directors who fully supported the project. The research was also approved by the Griffith University Human Ethics Committee.

QMF presents a variety of musical styles, local as well as national and international artists, with a central focus on community participation that is both geographical and cultural. Many artistic projects undertaken with communities are long-term collaborations that tell local stories and define local culture, with the objective of giving back to the community. The community arts values of the festival are central to the festival identity and organisational culture (QMF, 2011). The aim of community arts projects is to engage with members of a community to identify what and how they wish to express their voices, how they want to define themselves and their culture, and to then select the best way of doing so, be it a theatrical performance, a choir, a painting workshop, or any other form of art (Hager, 2008). Community arts bring people together to share and create something of common value (Derrett, 2003a; Bartleet, Dunbar-Hall, Letts, & Schippers, 2010). Such events have the potential to offer long-

term social, cultural and economic value and benefits for areas (Reid, 2008). Kay (2000, p. 423) furthermore argues that, “[a]rts projects are most effective when they are ‘owned’ by the local community.” These arts projects have to be of value for the community, in order to create a collective identity and ownership among community members. Therefore, there is a concentration on the production process, rather than on mere consumption of art (Hawkins, 1991). The Queensland Music Festival is a festival that includes both artistic excellence and community participation in its programme. The vision of the festival is to help communities define their own identity and to make their stories heard.

The QMF has a relatively flat organisational structure with seven permanent staff supported by a professional team of producers, project coordinators, technical managers, marketing professionals and secondments, as well as a logistics coordinator, a ticketing and function coordinator and a receptionist, hired in the lead up and during the event. QMF adopts a typical festival organisational structure, “pulsating” to accommodate festival staff with various backgrounds and skills within tight timeframes to create the festival experience. Within the organisational culture each team is set up in ‘PODS’, consisting of a producer, a project coordinator and a technical manager, as well as one or two secondments during the festival. The secondments are event management students who support the PODS in their day-to-day practices. Each POD is responsible for a number of events with their own network of contractors, creatives and artists. Furthermore, there is a marketing professional associated with each event, thus the different PODS work together with a centralised marketing team as well. This interdisciplinary POD structure and culture is unique to QMF, as many festival organisations develop teams around areas of specialisation; such as producers working together as a

team and technical staff forming another team. Having interdisciplinary PODS, however, can contribute to the development of an organisational culture that enhances knowledge creation and transfer by emphasising the relational dimension of knowledge management roles.

Methodology

This study was guided by a reflexive ethnographic methodology in the design, data collection, analysis and writing stages. The aim was to make multiple ‘voices’ heard about the perceptions of festival roles and to identify how organisational members construct meaning about knowledge management roles within the QMF from their different positions (Alvesson & Skoeldberg, 2000). This post-structuralist research approach emphasised how knowledge management roles were constructed from different perspectives within a certain festival culture, context and history. Within this organisational context the connection between power and knowledge was also made explicit: “It is not possible for power to be exercised without knowledge, it is impossible for knowledge not to engender power” (Foucault, 1980, p. 52). This power/knowledge relation (Foucault, 1977, 1980) has been explored through the first author’s immersion in the festival experience and being an insider and outsider at once, which is central to ethnography. Holloway, Brown and Shipway (2010) argued that ethnographic methods in festival and event research are still underutilised. Quantitative research remains dominant in the field; a small number of qualitative studies focus primarily on the event/festival experience (Cummings, 2007) rather than on the organisation behind it. Our ethnographic approach, however, allowed a meaningful engagement with the festival staff (Fullagar & Pavlidis, 2012) and a suitable

examination of the meanings that festival members attribute to knowledge and knowledge management roles within QMF. Through the use of these methods, we aimed to understand knowledge management from an insider perspective.

An interpretation of multiple experiences and meanings of knowledge management and knowledge management roles within QMF combined with the ethnographer's own insights and reflections was the basis for the research design. Our final interpretation of the organisational structure and culture and the different knowledge management roles and responsibilities is, however, not the only 'true' interpretation and definitive account; rather it is one possible production of meaning based on the available information, context and our personal backgrounds (Seale, 1999; McKee, 2003; Saukko, 2003; Snape & Spencer, 2003; Guba & Lincoln, 2005).

Within the context of the interpretive research design the QMF served as a single organisational case with multiple units of analysis (selected music performances in particular communities) that enabled an examination of how diverse roles and experiences were understood by participants. Díaz Andrade (2009) argues that case studies are often utilised within positivist approaches to management research and that interpretative design can better facilitate theory building. In this research we situate participant responses with the context of the organisational case study in order to identify how knowledge management is practiced and may be theorised as a relational process. The first author worked together with different members and PODS within the festival organisation between February and August 2011, attending various organisational and community events throughout this time period. To explore different

views on knowledge management roles within the festival case study three methods of data collection were used: ethnography, in-depth semi-structured interviews and textual analysis. Information from the Queensland Music Festival website, the festival brochure, meeting minutes, and other texts was collected and used to contextualise the research participants' responses and the creation of the festival identity. These texts about what the festival promises to be and its sense of community identity are part of the festival discourse. It is therefore important to understand the process of festival management in terms of this discursive level of meaning. This method of textual analysis also helped augment evidence from other sources, that is, from the first author's observations and interviews (Hall, 1997; McKee, 2003). Undertaking these three methods over a period of several months helped to track changes within the festival lifecycle and to identify changes in the organisational culture over time (Lewis, 2003) which was essential to understanding how shared meaning was created between festival members and in terms of their professional roles (Benton & Craib, 2001).

The first author spent time with the festival staff at their Brisbane office in order to gain an understanding of how they worked together, shared ideas, created knowledge and communicated problems and challenges, and thus enacted their roles and responsibilities. This included participation in meetings, workshops, rehearsals and other key events. The researcher also frequently assisted with small jobs, such as data entry, ticket allocations, mass emails, or follow-up phone calls. During and after all observations field notes were taken. These field notes included descriptions of different settings, events, participants, the organisational atmosphere as well as informal discussions with staff members about the process of becoming a member of the festival organisation and acquiring organisational knowledge. Going back to these field notes at

a later time allowed us to reflect on earlier observations and to identify changes in perceptions and meaning.

A total of 28 in-depth interviews were conducted with a range of participants from different positions, with different responsibilities, from long-term staff members as well as newcomers. A method of “purposive sampling” was used to assure that participants “have particular features or characteristics which will enable detailed exploration and understanding of the central themes and puzzles which the researcher wishes to study” (Ritchie, Lewis, & Elam, 2003, p. 78). In this particular study this relates to the participants’ experiences and roles within the festival organisation. Of these 28 interviews 12 respondents were members of the core staff at the festival office – six permanent and six seasonal staff members, with three respondents interviewed both before and after the festival. Participation in interviews was completely voluntary, with some interviews occurring prior, others during or after the festival in order to cover the temporal dimension of the festival. Nvivo was used as a tool for storing, coding and analysing the interview transcriptions, field notes and other texts. Several themes around knowledge management and the QMF organisational culture were identified through the analysis of common ‘statements’ made by participants about professional roles.

It is impossible to capture objective reality in qualitative research, and it was not the goal of our post-structuralist research to discover the one and only ‘reality’ and ‘truth’ about knowledge management roles in festival organisations. A combination of multiple methods, however, provided richness and depth to the issue under research (Lather,

1993; Lewis & Ritchie, 2003; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). We aimed to interpret the meanings that festival staff attribute to their festival roles and to identify the implicit knowledge management responsibilities as part of these festival roles. Richardson (2000) highlights that the insights and stories interview participants gave about their festival experience depend on the discourses available to them. These experiences and discourses are all unique and continuously change. Therefore, it has to be acknowledged that the discourses available to our participants as well as the research team could have been different in terms of where and when the interview was conducted (before, during or after the festival). Furthermore, Richardson (2000) argues that post-structuralist researchers believe in more than three ways of approaching and understanding the world and thus she introduces the term “crystallisation” rather than triangulation as a metaphor for validity. Reality changes whenever the researcher changes the angle or perspective from which she looks at it (Saukko, 2003). Through crystallisation, therefore, we gained a deep and complex understanding of the topic. However, it has to be acknowledged that our understanding is only partial.

Findings

Through an analysis of observations and interviews we identified how staff members were actively involved in knowledge management in relation to two key themes - the *collaborative organisational culture* where relationships were highly valued, and the organisation of staff roles within an *inter-disciplinary POD-team structure*. These two themes identify how a relational understanding of knowledge management contributed to effective knowledge creation and transfer as evidenced in the findings we present below and ensuing discussion.

Consistently staff members emphasised how the QMF organisational culture supported new ideas and innovation, thus providing an opportunity for all staff to contribute. Through this collaborative culture insights and new ideas were generated through staff engagement in the process of creating the festival.

I think it is a very good atmosphere, also a very empowering atmosphere in the core team, which means (...) you can say what you think and you can possibly influence things in a way which means that you have a lot of great minds thinking alike and you get a much better outcome. As opposed to just [them] saying "this is what you've got to do." (interview 22, 05/08/11).

A collaborative culture also led to a strong sense of belonging within the team, with some respondents using metaphors, such as, their "QMF family". In terms of knowledge management this importantly demonstrates how the willingness of individuals to share knowledge is enhanced through an organisational culture that values relationships alongside key task oriented roles (Thatchenkery & Chowdhry, 2007; Jo & Joo, 2011).

Collaborative knowledge sharing was also supported by the absence of an overt display of power in the form of hierarchical organisational roles in the QMF office. Different staff roles at QMF were acknowledged by participants and regarded as equally important in the flow of knowledge through the organisation. Participants commented on the importance of openness within the organisational culture that made power-knowledge relations more transparent.

You hear stories about other organisations where there is a cultural secrecy and knowledge is power. And I just go like, "what's the point?! It doesn't help anybody!" If you want to bring people on to help you solve problems, you've got to share the information (interview 27, 16/08/11).

I don't know, it's a hierarchy thing, which doesn't exist here. But I'm sure there are things that [they] don't tell us, but they are things we don't really particularly want to know about anyway. But no one is sitting there, whispering in each other's ears (interview 4, 07/06/11).

This last statement also demonstrates trust between team members, highlighting that even if certain information is withheld staff trust that this knowledge is not crucial to their role. The combination of a sense of belonging and trust relationships among the team members are key aspects of a collaborative organisational culture at QMF that supports innovation and relational knowledge management by involving all core staff members.

Structurally, the festival headquarters are set up to facilitate this collaborative culture although there is a clear demarcation of responsibility with senior staff regarded as the key people for knowledge management. When asked who they thought were the key people responsible for knowledge management at QMF, most participants named the executive director and/or a core management team member. The core of permanent staff were viewed as essential to maintaining the continuity of knowledge sharing over time: "it's probably the people who are here all the way through" (interview 5, 09/06/11). The senior staff at QMF also supported collaboration amongst seasonal staff members through the establishment of distinct roles within different teams who were organised into interdisciplinary PODS within the office space. Careful selection of event professionals was undertaken to ensure staff were able to bring extensive experience to their roles and responsibilities. From a senior management perspective qualifications in

event management were not regarded as highly as demonstrated experience in particular roles (technical, creative, logistical) and a history of strong collaboration:

Everyone is really approachable. If you got questions, you can ask. Yeah, very much so. And everyone is quite comfortable asking for help ... there is no issues. It's kind of one of those rare places where you walk in and if you get your job done, you'll be able to help someone else. They may need you, and vice versa. (...) there's our team and then they work with their own artists and directors and the rest of it. And then there's also the tech guys, they have all their contacts that do their job just for the core of the festival. But I think that all the people here have a lot of respect in the industry. So, Mark and Andy and Alex and Tom, they are all genuine people and they wanna help. You know... (interview 1, 02/06/11)

The emphasis placed upon collaboration and interpersonal relationships as a key aspect of professional roles was viewed as essential to the creation of a shared understanding of the QMF vision and hence a successful festival. A participant commented on how festival knowledge was created and produced through these relationships over time despite staff changes in particular roles,

The fact that the programme has grown so much, is a result of consistency, continuity and shared understanding. It's more than just knowledge, it's understanding and a shared belief system of what the festival should be (interview 7, 15/06/11)

It was evident that at QMF there was not a specific or appointed *chief knowledge officer*. However, there were several staff members who enacted the roles of *KM champions and strategists*, although not with formalised or official titles. The senior management team and the permanent staff were responsible for the knowledge management processes and for communicating a shared vision. Most importantly, QMF

used a very specific hiring strategy to ensure that seasonal team members also embraced this vision and culture and worked together effectively and efficiently. Collaboration was not only considered in relation to specific roles, but also in terms of working relationships and personalities. For example, a producer might be the expert in his or her team, but the composition of the team was considered to be equally important in enabling the flow of knowledge management:

I do take a pride in getting the right person for the job. (...) So, we get a project, we work out who the best person for that project is - and that may not necessarily be the producer. It may be the tech manager, okay? So we say, "okay that really fits with that tech manager, let's give it to them, because that's going to be our strongest hand." And then we form the team around [that person]... (...) We have to look at the way people get on. And you see, well actually both teams in there, the way that [they] work together, they are just like one person, it's amorphous. (...) You can't see the seams; you really can't see the seams, where one area stops and the other area starts (interview 5, 09/06/11).

The design of PODS within the QMF office proved to be a crucial structure that supported knowledge creation and transfer. During the high pressured time of the festival seasonal staff members took on important knowledge management roles. However, the scope of knowledge management roles was not specified rather it emerged out of the organisational culture and the structure of teams within PODS. Individuals working together on particular events not only acted as the links between the permanent staff and the secondments and volunteers, but also between QMF and their contractors and artists.

So the three people working together, me, Veronica and Claire... there's a lot of experience put together. Even though she is young, she's done a lot of work. Which goes to how this organisation has done its set-up in the PODS... The [other] festivals I've been to and worked with don't do that.

They seem to clump technical together, they seem to clump producers together. Now... that makes absolutely no sense! If you drew that on a diagram, it makes no sense, because... why? As a technical, I don't need to talk to my other technical managers. I need to talk to my direct show! Our four shows, we talk together. If I need to get information from other technical managers, I stand up, walk over and talk to them. But more than likely, I will be talking to the other two people on my show (...). So, it's a very good set-up in that way and not many people do that which kind of shocks the hell out of me... (interview 4, 07/06/11).

The unique POD structure at QMF thus resembles the practice of having several *knowledge brokers* in the organisation. Articulating or 'naming' these particular knowledge management roles as part of their broader festival role could contribute to greater professionalisation and staff development around knowledge creation and transfer. However, a relational understanding of knowledge management also requires a nuanced approach to the operation of power within and between staff PODS. While the POD structure has contributed to the collaborative culture of the organisation each POD will generate its own dynamic and hence influence staff members' perceptions of how they belong within the organisation and how they perform their roles. The first author identified the differing relationships between each POD (with its unique event responsibilities and team culture) and the overall QMF vision and festival strategy (Leclercq-Vandelannoitte, 2011).

Today I noticed that the way POD 1 members communicate with each other is quite different from the rest of the team. In POD 1 there are very comedian like characters who work together, they are loud and noisy and always up for a laugh. Their way of communicating is quite intense; they don't bother if others can overhear conversations. Even when I am sitting with them, observing everything they do and listening to everything they say, they don't bother. PODS 2 and 3 are quite different, much quieter indeed. They seem to structure their way of communicating. Sometimes I see them gather in the meeting room to discuss recent issues (field notes, 05/07/11).

In terms of knowledge management it is important to recognise how the particular power and professional relations (Foucault, 1982) within each POD influence POD members' understanding of their roles and responsibilities, as well as the production of knowledge and engagement in knowledge transfer across the organisation. QMF secondments are also placed within these PODS, which leads to a shared understanding between the seasonal staff members and their assistants. Permanent and seasonal staff are in the position to enable or constrain the performance of staff on secondment by providing information and knowledge to assist them to learn 'how things are done' at QMF. Despite the potential for conflict the majority of participants identified how power was exercised in highly productive ways to enable shared understanding of roles and tasks. Through mentoring practices, not only the core team or permanent staff, but also the seasonal staff and their assistants were able to perform the roles of *knowledge workers* at QMF.

Finally, allowing an outside researcher to join the festival organisation for an extended period of time demonstrated how the team was open to another kind of knowledge management role. Meyer (2010) argues that a researcher can also act as a knowledge broker, however, in this particular study, the first author assumed the role of a *KM researcher* and at times facilitated reflection upon organisational practices. This was not so much a brokering role, but rather through interviews and day to day discussion she created an opportunity for individuals to reflect on what they were doing and why. Through this reflexive process the researcher was able to acquire organisational knowledge and also to facilitate a degree of organisational learning through her

involvement. In this way the research contributed to the process of professionalisation as QMFs understanding of their own approach to knowledge management developed.

I think it's really interesting to have you here as someone to reflect to. (...) I think you've done a great job in terms of becoming visible and engaging with people. So, well done. And I think for us, to have a moment every now and again to take that step back and reflect in this process, is really interesting (interview 27, 16/08/11).

Discussion

At QMF knowledge management roles and responsibilities were not expressed and defined for each staff member. Rather, these roles and responsibilities were constructed through a shared understanding of 'how things are done' within the festival's organisational structure and culture. At QMF, the employment of professionals, who were very experienced in their specific roles and also valued collaboration, was the basis for effective and efficient working relationships in an otherwise constrained and time pressured organisational environment. This hiring strategy contributed to high emotional attachment to the organisation and a feeling of identification with and belonging to the "QMF family" (Jo & Joo, 2011; Suppiah & Singh Sandhu, 2011). These findings support Morrison's (1994) argument that staff members define not only their formal roles and job responsibilities, but also assume informal roles that include knowledge management tasks and relationships. However, without explicit identification of such employee contributions to knowledge management there exists the danger of losing expertise when staff leave, under valuing high staff performance and miscommunication that can directly affect the relational dimension of knowledge creation and transfer.

Even though the permanent staff members were regarded as the key people responsible for knowledge management at QMF, there was potential for all individuals to contribute. The productive exercise of power was evident in the commitment and contributions of staff members, which enabled QMF to be innovative and enhance competitiveness. A highly successful 2011 festival season with over 90 different partners and sponsors and a 20% increase in attendance from 2009 was partly the result of this strategy (personal communication). Our research found that the collaborative organisational culture and communication of a common vision were crucial to effective knowledge management practices within the festival. Moreover, at QMF it was recognised that the senior management team were not perceived to have exercised hierarchical power or to have withheld information, which also enhanced the relational knowledge domains of trust, reciprocity and sharing amongst organisational participants (O'Dell, 2004). In particular, the design of interdisciplinary teams and POD structures was essential for connecting new and existing knowledge (from contractors and artists) and building bridges within the QMF team and also between QMF and key stakeholders (Getz, Andersson, & Larson, 2007). The producers, project coordinators and technical managers who comprised these PODS, could thus be regarded as 'knowledge brokers', even if this term is not explicitly used within the organisation.

Through the creation of PODS these implicit knowledge management roles could be made more explicit to support staff members in taking on knowledge management responsibilities. An explicit discourse about knowledge management within QMF could enhance professionalisation and further strengthen the organisational culture that highly

values staff contributions. A relational, rather than technical, construction of knowledge could offer QMF another way of articulating a discourse about the role that ‘knowledge workers’ can play to create an innovative festival organisation. Even though many of these knowledge management roles are organisationally displaced in the off-season, the collaborative culture within the team allows staff members to continuously share their knowledge and experiences with the permanent staff who are able to critically reflect on effective knowledge management actions and practices for future events. This strategy helps QMF to stay innovative and competitive and become a more self-conscious learning organisation (Getz, 2007), which is a crucial step in the professionalisation of festival organisations.

Limitations

This paper has examined the knowledge management roles and responsibilities within one festival organisation in Australia. The QMF organisation has been fairly stable over the last few years with little turnover in full-time staff, nor does the organisation rely heavily on volunteer staff. Further research could therefore examine festival organisations of different shapes and sizes and in particular different organisational structures, as the QMF POD structure is not a structure that is utilised in all event types. This would provide a more nuanced understanding of how different festival and event organisational cultures affect knowledge management roles, structures and perceptions. Researchers taking on different roles within one festival organisation could also provide a more detailed and diverse picture of the issue, particularly in terms of board member roles and outsider roles, such as contractors, sponsors or artists.

Conclusion

Due to the growth of event management as a professional domain, festival managers as well as seasonal staff members are expected to become more knowledgeable and experienced (Harris, 2004). Effective knowledge management can further enhance the professionalisation of the industry. The basis of effective knowledge management in festival organisations rests upon the understanding that staff members have about their role in this process and the organisational culture that supports new ideas and innovation. The challenge for festival managers is to develop a collaborative culture where a shared vision is embraced by individuals and teams. In this way all staff are supported to develop a clear understanding of how they can contribute to an effective and efficient festival organisation (Yang, 2007; Jo & Joo, 2011). The QMF was identified in our research as being particularly successful in their ‘relational’ approach to knowledge management in two key areas. First, they developed a *collaborative organisational culture* where all staff were implicitly encouraged to perform ‘knowledge broker’ and ‘knowledge worker’ roles. Second, collaborative relationships and knowledge sharing were structured through the organisation of staff roles within *inter-disciplinary POD-teams*. These two themes identify how a relational understanding of knowledge management contributed to effective knowledge creation and transfer.

Knowledge management thus requires more than a conceptualisation of knowledge as technological or asset based, although databases and checklists are important tools. This study has shown that the relational dimension of knowledge management, the shared understanding and culture are equally important. However, there is a key question about

how effective knowledge management can be incorporated and sustained within festivals as learning organisations. ‘Pulsating’ events have a special challenge to become learning organizations with solid ‘memories’, as they have only a few permanent staff” (Getz, 2007, p. 294). There are a number of strategies that festival organisations could develop to improve knowledge management processes and practices. For example, organisations could more explicitly identify and name knowledge management roles and responsibilities (in job descriptions, internal communication, or organisational structures). The relational dimension of knowledge management could be embraced through strategies that aim to capture organisational ‘stories’ such as video, podcast and other creative formats, in order to communicate them to staff over time. In this sense both core and volunteer staff are a central source of organisational knowledge about how to continuously improve communication and creative collaboration. As other researchers have identified there exist a range of innovative evaluation processes that could be used to capture and transfer knowledge while retaining the important focus on culture and relationships. Katzeff and Ware (2006), for example, created a video storytelling booth in order to record volunteer workers’ stories and personal accounts of their experience and work with the organisation, as well as to make their roles visible. A collaborative organisational culture and inter-disciplinary POD-teams can enhance knowledge management throughout the festival lifecycle. With the professionalisation of event management there is an opportunity for festivals to benefit from more explicit critical reflection upon how they conceptualise and operationalise knowledge management practices.

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